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## THE COTTON INDUSTRY

D. A. TOMPKINS

A very brief summary of the history of cotton production in the United States is taken from my book, "Cotton and Cotton Oil," as follows :

"For the ancient history of cotton, dating 1000 years before Christ, the practical man of to-day cares very little. Even the minor details of its introduction into the United States possesses only historical interest, and these will be taken up only to illustrate the evolution of the industry.

"The early colonists naturally experimented on their new found soil with all the divers seeds that they could obtain from all parts of the earth. Thus, cotton became an early experimental crop, beginning in Virginia about the year 1600, and continuing in all the southern latitudes for nearly two hundred years before it came to be seriously regarded as a useful crop.

"During this epoch a great army of hand weavers had sprung up in England, and it was becoming a serious problem with them to get yarn to weave.

"In all times and places, when there is a serious demand for any invention, the genius of the age soon develops and perfects that invention. In 1767 James Hargreaves invented in England the spinning jenny, by which one operative could run as many as twenty spindles, instead of one, as theretofore. This was successfully improved by Arkwright and Crompton in England, and others, so that it soon became an easy matter to provide yarn for the hand weavers. After the power loom had been introduced by Cartwright, also in England, in

1785, the world's consumption of all kinds of yarn increased immensely, and thus the demand for raw textile fibres was a constantly growing one.

"The American colonists took a growing interest in cotton production and made every effort to meet the demand from the mother country, and also the new demands of the new independent colonies.

"In 1786 Governor Tattnal, of Georgia, received some Sea Island seed from the Bahama Islands, and encouraged its production in the coast region.

"About the same time a Mrs. Burden, of South Carolina, promoted its growth on the sea islands of that state.

"Several difficulties prevented the rapid spread of cotton culture in those days. Scarcity of labor in the new country, due to the tedious process of harvesting or "picking" was an important factor, but the prime difficulty was in separating the useful lint from the then useless seed. This work was done entirely by hand until the ancient roller gin was brought over.

"As in the invention of other machinery, a crying necessity stimulated genius. The roller gin was already in use, and worked well for Sea Island cotton. In 1793, Eli Whitney, then living near Savannah, Ga., invented a cotton gin, comprising many of the features of the gin now in use for upland cotton. In 1794 he obtained his patent. In 1793 Hodgen Holmes, of Augusta, Ga., invented the saw gin, an improvement on Whitney's machine. In 1796 he obtained his patent. Thus in the period from 1793 to 1796, the saw gin became a standard machine, and an epoch maker in the history of cotton.

"The effect of this invention upon the cotton production of the country was wonderful. As soon as a few of these machines could be made and put upon the market,

it was seen that with the available labor it was easy to increase the cotton production many fold.

"In 1790 the production of cotton was equivalent to 3,000 bales of 500 pounds each, and in 1798, about the time the use of saw gins became general, the production was increased to an equivalent of about 30,000 bales of 500 pounds each.

"It soon became apparent that the productiveness of the soil would justify much more cotton planting than the available labor could handle, even with the help of the cotton gin. This idea fostered a great importation of negro slaves, and thus the growth of slavery and the increase of the cotton crop were simultaneous, each being sustained by the other. This material result was in opposition to a strong sentiment against slavery.

"The cotton crops steadily increased on this basis, building up and enriching an agricultural population which became an aristocracy in the southern United States. The cotton crop had grown to 4,000,000 bales in 1861, being mostly produced by the labor of the 4,000,000 slaves.

"From 1861 to 1865 the Civil War interfered with agricultural operations so that the average annual production during that period was reduced to a half million bales. The Civil War resulted in the abolition of slavery. The ill-advised enfranchisement of the slaves who were led by dishonest adventurers, induced a condition of political and industrial disorder. This condition retarded the recovery of the cotton growing states from the disastrous effects of the war, and hence it required about ten years after the war for the cotton planters to again reach a production of 4,000,000 bales. Since that time, the crop has continually increased, reaching to nearly 10,000,000 bales in 1900, as exhibited by the following table."

The following table showing the growth of the industry and prices obtained in different periods is taken from the same source.

THE PRODUCTION AND PRICE OF COTTON FROM  
1790 TO 1900.

Year.	No. Bales 500 lbs. Gross.	Price per lb. in New York.
1790-----	3,000-----	26.0
1791-----	4,200-----	26.0
1792-----	6,300-----	29.0
1793-----	10,400-----	32.0
1794-----	16,700-----	33.0
1795-----	16,700-----	36.5
1796-----	20,800-----	36.5
1797-----	22,900-----	34.0
1798-----	31,200-----	39.0
1799-----	41,600-----	44.0
1800-----	73,000-----	28.0
1810-----	177,000-----	16.0
1820-----	331,500-----	17.0
1830-----	669,800-----	10.0
1840-----	1,737,700-----	8.9
1850-----	2,083,800-----	12.3
1860-----	4,668,900-----	11.0
1865-----	250,000-----	80.0
1870-----	2,862,300-----	24.0
1880-----	5,449,200-----	12.0
1890-----	7,311,400-----	11.5
1900-----	9,436,400-----	8.7

It may be said that the development of cotton culture went from a mere beginning to 10,000,000 bales in the 19th century. The value of 10,000,000 bales on to-day's market is \$600,000,000. In the latter half of the century the seed have been made the basis of an industry yielding products worth \$100,000,000.

There were those who thought that slave labor was essential to the continued development of cotton production. The important inventions, chiefly those of Whitney and Holmes, upon the basis of which cotton production was made profitable, were all made before

slavery became dominant. No other improvements were made until after the abolition of the institution. Since that time, great and continued progress and many important inventions and improvements have been made. Events since the dis-establishment of slavery have shown that slave labor is not essential to produce cotton. It transpires that the institution of slavery not only prevented the development of manufactures but dried up those which had been established before slavery became the dominant influence in the South. In the first decade of the 19th century Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia led the rest of the United States in manufactures. By 1850 the manufacturing interests of the slave states had been reduced to nearly nothing as compared to those of the free states, thus limiting the occupations of the people to the production of cotton, tobacco, sugar and rice with slave labor.

I conceive that slave labor never has been of advantage in the development of cotton production. Laws necessary to the maintenance of slavery drove out the free white labor, hindered and ultimately stopped immigration. This element emigrated very largely as slavery grew in importance and influence. Throughout the first half of the 19th century there was a tide of emigration from what had been the manufacturing sections of the slave states to what was then the Northwest, now comprising the states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. In this tide were the Harrisons, Thurmans, Stevensons, Lincolns, Cannons, the present speaker of the national House of Representatives being one of these, and many, many others. Another tide of emigration was to the Southwest, this being composed of those who believed in slave labor and who required more land or new land to work upon.

Because of this emigration the slave states did not grow in population and wealth in proportion to their resources. Staple crops was all that could be depended upon, and while the system made a few people rich, it destroyed those markets which manufactures furnish for perishable farm products and therefore made it impossible to produce cotton so cheaply as in an environment where farm products have cash markets.

Since the abolition of slavery there has been developed a large and important industry based upon cotton seed as a raw material. The cotton seed products are cotton oil, cotton seed meal, linters and cotton seed hulls. The aggregate value of these is now about \$100,000,000 annually. The hulls and meal are very superior feed for cattle and the value and economy of this feed has brought about the development of the business of raising and fattening cattle. At some of the oil mills, several thousand head of cattle are annually fatted for the markets. In the environment made by slavery, this large source of wealth would probably never have been found and developed.

The invention of the cotton gin by Whitney and Holmes is the basis upon which the development of a large production of cotton was made possible. Patents were issued for these inventions in 1794 and 1796. Up to this time the Southern states had been settled and developed on lines exactly parallel with the settlement and development of the Northern states. The South was attractive to the European. Slavery had existed of course but very much as it had in New England or Pennsylvania. Manufactures flourished, commerce was prosperous, and all the conditions were about the same as in the other states. When the national government was formed,

Virginia headed the list of states, Pennsylvania came second and North Carolina third.

The cotton gin made cotton planting so profitable that the slave became of great value as a laborer. Where cotton would grow the slave was put to work in the cotton field. Most of those in the rest of the United States were bought and the slave trade was made brisk by the demand for slaves direct from Africa. The laws soon began to take the shape most favorable to cotton planting with slave labor. The manufacturers of wool, of iron, of wagons, and other articles became interested in the new movement and invested money in land and slaves instead of in the extension of their factories. The free labor was driven from the country or to a life of poverty on poor land.

In the new situation existing to-day we find the following conditions :

(1) Manufactures have been re-established and the manufacturing populations make markets for perishable farm products and these incidentally reduce the cost of cotton.

(2) Commerce has again become prosperous and this sustains transportation, thus enabling commodities to reach markets quickly and cheaply.

(3) All influences favorable to emigration are gone and emigration has practically ceased.

(4) All influences adverse to immigration are gone and large numbers of people are actually coming into the cotton growing states from the North. The conditions are very favorable for the European immigrant.

(5) The maintenance of the fertility of the land by the use of commercial fertilizers is now well understood and there is an enormous business in commercial fertilizers carried on under state control.



(6) The price of cotton is high enough to encourage its production alone on a farm. With the new markets for perishable farm products in addition to high-priced cotton, farming has become a most attractive proposition in the cotton growing states.

I have in the past pointed out that America must make an abundant and reasonably cheap supply of cotton or some other parts of the world would supplement her crop and take away the practical monopoly she enjoys. Already Egypt and India are producing more cotton than we did thirty years ago. I conceive that conditions are now more favorable for the economic production of cotton in the United States than ever before. The growth of the production in Egypt and India has been during a period of confusion and re-adjustment of political and social conditions in the cotton growing states. From this time forward good government and political order seem assured. As slavery was an adverse influence here, so the social conditions in Egypt and India handicap them in their competition with us under our new conditions of freedom and education.

It has been suggested that the new manufacturing interests are drawing so much labor from the farms that our production of cotton must of necessity be checked. This is within limits true. In the state of North Carolina, fifty thousand people, practically all natives, are now working in cotton mills. Probably as many more are employed in furniture factories, saw mills, cotton mills, on railroads, and or are in other ways connected with the new developments. If the same number has been employed in new developments in ten cotton states, this would represent a million people who have left the farms. This has relieved the cotton farmer of a tremendous

competition and has also made markets for his products other than cotton.

This makes a very attractive condition for the European immigrant and by the new environment of freedom and educational facilities the European immigrant will surely be attracted. I have no doubt but that the United States will continue to lead the world in cotton production and in future, supply at a fair price, an ample quantity of the staple to meet the demands of the world.

The influence of the cotton gin on cotton production was incalculable. We have come now to a situation where a successful and economic picking machine would be of incalculable value. It costs now about \$100,000,000 to pick the crop. The picking is done with the fingers and the strength of the picker is wasted in leaning and bending the body. A machine to which man power might be economically applied ought to reduce the cost of picking to \$50,000,000, and one to which mule or horse power could be applied ought to reduce the cost to not exceeding \$20,000,000.

An essential prerequisite for the maintenance of the present production of cotton and its further development is to keep the markets of the world open to American made goods. It would seem as if our access to Chinese markets, especially those of Manchuria, is now seriously threatened by Russia and this in violation of treaty agreements made between the allied nations at Peking after the Chinese War.

Those who have given special study to this subject express great alarm lest Russia not only drive us out of Manchuria but ultimately out of all China and the entire Orient. These claim that with Manchuria gained, Russia's position in the Eastern markets would be so

strengthened that she could more easily take each succeeding step until the whole territory is covered. Then by the control of enormous populations, she could command the political control of the world. If these apprehensions are true, we have in this country, the farmer and manufacturer alike, a far greater interest at stake in the Japan-Russia controversy than our government appreciates. The value of an Isthmian canal would be tremendously diminished if we were to lose our markets in the Far East.

In the matter of slavery we were not wise. Through that system an error insidiously crept upon us which nearly wrecked our progress before it was fully corrected. In regard to preserving and extending our markets it is to be earnestly hoped that our government will not remain supine in any case where action is needed to preserve conditions necessary to the maintenance and further development of our cotton industry both in the field and in the factory.